

Emirates International Private School Branch Meadows

Inspection Report

Foundation Stage to Grade 13

Report published May 2010

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Explanation of the inspection levels used in the report

Outstanding – exceptionally high quality of performance or practice.

Good – the expected level of quality for every school in Dubai.

Acceptable – the minimum level of acceptability required for Dubai. All key aspects of performance and practice in every school should meet or exceed this level.

Unsatisfactory – quality not yet at the level acceptable for schools in Dubai. Schools will be expected to take urgent measures to improve the quality of any aspect of their performance or practice that is judged at this level.

Emirates International Private School Branch, Meadows was inspected in February 2010 as part of the regular inspection of all schools in Dubai. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated students' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on students' progress in Islamic Education (for Muslim students) Arabic, English, mathematics and science.

Basic information about the school

Located in Emirates Hills, Emirates International Private School Branch "Meadows" is a private school providing education for students from Foundation Stage to Grade 13, aged three to 18 years. The school combines an International Primary Curriculum (IPC) with the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB-DP). Since the previous inspection, an Executive Principal had been appointed with overall responsibility for the primary and secondary schools. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,488 students on roll, with 918 in the primary school and 570 in the secondary school. The students' attendance reported by the school for the last academic session was good.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) analysed responses to on-line questionnaires completed by parents. Almost all parents said their children liked the school and most parents felt that children's behaviour was good. A majority were satisfied with the range and quality of activities available. A significant minority did not know about the school's response to the recommendations of the previous inspection. A few parents raised specific issues about the provision of sporting activities and the qualifications of teachers in the school.

How well does the school perform overall?

The overall performance of the school was acceptable. A number of good features were identified by inspectors, as was the largely positive progress since the previous inspection. A small number of weaknesses remained, particularly in Islamic Education; these were being addressed by senior leaders. The attainment and progress of students in most subjects were at least in line with expectations and students were making good progress in the upper grades in Arabic, English and science. However, attainment and progress in Islamic Education were unsatisfactory throughout the school. Students displayed good attitudes and behaviour and enjoyed most aspects of school life. They had acceptable civic understanding and appreciation and understanding of Islam and of the multi-cultural society of Dubai. Students showed good economic and environmental understanding and could apply this to their lives.

Teaching and learning were acceptable in Foundation Stage, primary and secondary and good at post-16. High quality teaching was seen in a number of subjects, rooted in secure teacher knowledge, expert planning, assessment strategies and unambiguously high expectations of students. However, overly-didactic teaching limited students' progress and their enjoyment of lessons. Procedures and practices in assessment had improved markedly since the previous inspection, although the marking of students' work remained inconsistent. The curriculum was acceptable from Foundation Stage to secondary, although opportunities for good outdoor learning in the early years were not yet fully in place. Recent improvements in relation to international benchmarks had led to good curriculum provision at post-16. Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were good. The buildings were clean, well maintained and secure. Relationships between staff and students were positive and support systems for students across all phases were well established and contributed to students' overall well-being.

Leadership and management across the school were acceptable overall and processes for self-evaluation were acceptable. The Executive Principal had launched the primary and secondary phases on a path of continuous improvement and most leaders and middle managers were excited by the challenge of raising student attainment and the quality of teaching. There was enthusiasm amongst middle leaders to develop their roles and responsibilities further, in order to improve the overall school experience for students. The school's links with parents were acceptable; parents were keen to play enhanced roles as partners in their children's learning. The views of parents were not yet influential in defining priorities, but recent governance initiatives had been well judged in this direction. The school's overall resources and facilities were good, with elements of outstanding provision alongside some limitations in outdoor space.

Key features of the school

- Teachers' expert subject knowledge, planning and assessment in the post-16 phase in Arabic, English and science;
- Students' good behaviour, attitudes to learning, and positive relationships with staff;
- Improvements in assessment since the previous inspection;
- High levels of supervision and support for students as they move up through the primary and secondary schools;
- Good resources for learning in most curriculum areas.

Recommendations

- Raise attainment across all subjects, particularly in Islamic Education;
- Improve teaching, particularly in Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases, to a consistently good level;
- Improve the key aspects of assessment further, particularly marking, to help students improve their work;
- Implement the planned curriculum changes, with special reference to outdoor learning for Foundation Stage children;
- Continue to develop leadership capacity at all levels, with a strong focus on students' learning outcomes.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?

In Islamic Education, attainment and progress were unsatisfactory throughout the school. In Grade 3 most students could not explain the meanings of the verses of The Holy Qur'an. In Grade 5, the majority of students knew the obligatory and voluntary prayers. However, most of them had limited knowledge of supplications and the daily prayers. Grade 9 students knew the stages of the prohibition of alcohol but could not link this learning with the verses of The Holy Qur'an and their lives. In Grade 11, the majority of students knew the types of Hadith but made insufficient progress in building on their previous knowledge. Most Grade 13 students recited The Holy Qur'an but they made many mistakes in their recitation.

Attainment and progress in Arabic were acceptable in primary and secondary and good at post-16 level. Attainment and progress levels were variable for first language students in classes of the same grade. Listening and reading skills were in line with expectations, but speaking and writing were less developed. Grade 13 students spoke clearly and fluently. They were able to debate various topics confidently. However, students with Arabic as an additional language did not progress at the same pace as native Arabic speakers. They only made acceptable progress. Their progress and attainment were inhibited by frequent use of English.

Students in all classes showed acceptable appreciation and understanding of poetry and stories.

In English, attainment and progress were acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary and good in secondary and post-16. All students developed expected skill levels in listening, speaking, reading and writing. The 'Big Write' initiatives in primary had begun to impact positively on the students' capacities in oral and written expression. Most of the older primary students wrote with well-formed cursive script, used figures of speech and described the books they read, justifying their points of view. Students in Grade 7 and 8 demonstrated good oral and extended writing skills, while Grade 9 students interpreted text and analysed stylistic characteristics in literature effectively. Grade 10 to 13 students used their creative skills effectively in deduction, reasoning, expression and advanced critical thinking.

In mathematics, attainment and progress were acceptable. In Foundation Stage and primary, the youngest children knew their numbers and were able to use number and quantity words during play. Grade 1 students were competent in the use of ordinal numbers, with higher attainers able to progress beyond twenty. When measured against international benchmarks, the attainment of primary students was in line with expectations. However, there were gaps in the skills of investigation and problem solving. Attainment and progress in the secondary grades were acceptable. Grade 7 students were familiar with regular and irregular shapes and identified lines of symmetry. The majority of Grade 11 students attained a level that matched international benchmarks. Post-16 students attained at the level expected and made acceptable progress in their understanding of the requirements of the IB-DP.

Attainment and progress in science were acceptable in Foundation Stage and primary and good at secondary and post-16 levels. Children in Foundation Stage used basic scientific terms to describe the characteristics of the natural environment. Primary students experimented to verify teacher-led hypotheses and collaborated to construct and measure the loading capacity of objects. However, they did not act independently to discover the validity of their hypotheses or develop scientific skills effectively. Secondary and post-16 students understood scientific processes and protocols and evaluated experiment outcomes competently. Assessment was used well to validate their methods. Senior students successfully applied their understanding of pre-delivered topic content in DNA separation, dissection and measuring combustion and acquired high quality learning outcomes.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' behaviour around the school and their attitudes to learning in classrooms were consistently good. Positive relationships were enjoyed between staff and students, and students respected each other's spaces in the limited playground and canteen areas. Punctuality to lessons was prompt and overall school attendance was good. The students' council played a role in promoting consistent values and expectations.

Civic and Islamic understanding was acceptable throughout the school. Students appreciated living in Dubai but they were unsure how the diversity contributed to living in the city. Most students could mention only a few landmarks and skyscrapers in Dubai. Students participated in many events, such as charitable work for the Haiti earthquake, but their celebration of local culture was limited. Primary school students expressed their need to know more about Dubai. Their knowledge of Islam was acceptable, although the school library, daily assemblies and students' activities did not fully support this area of the school's work. A few secondary students expressed their wish that the school would do more to promote local culture and traditions.

Economic and environmental understanding was good throughout the school. The level of cleanliness was good and there was an adequate number of recycling bins. The majority of students understood the economic status of Dubai and could understand a few sources of national income. They were aware of significant environmental and safety problems such as pollution, littering and traffic accidents. Students' participation in projects and activities enabled them to have a good understanding of how to improve life in Dubai.

How good are the teaching and learning?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable from Foundation Stage to secondary and good at post-16. Teachers' subject knowledge was good, lessons were generally well planned and timed, and resources were used appropriately to support learners. Where teaching had the greatest impact, teachers had high expectations of what students could achieve. They posed probing, incisive questions which helped students find the answers for themselves, building upon previous learning. Skilful teachers explained to students what they were expected to learn at the start of lessons. Students were then involved with their teachers in reviewing and assessing what they had learnt together at the end of lessons. Imaginative teaching promoted purposeful digression and harnessed information and communication technology (ICT). Where teaching was less effective teachers did not manage students' learning or time well. Lesson objectives were not clear to the learners, there was too much teacher talk, and there was an over-reliance upon textbooks.

Students' learning was acceptable from Foundation Stage to secondary and good in post-16. Learning was best when students worked collaboratively in pairs and small groups on fun and challenging activities. For example, students developed not only new skills but emotional intelligence in responding to ethical issues in science, English and geography. In art and physical education, students thrived on developing high performance skills which they shared

with staff and fellow students. When promotion of critical thinking was absent or there was no connection between lesson objectives and the tasks set, students' learning was impeded.

Assessment was acceptable in the Foundation Stage, primary and secondary phases, and was good at post-16 level. Whole-school awareness had developed to ensure a consistent approach to knowing the attainment and progress rates of all students. Record keeping had improved and the school was using external benchmarks to determine levels of attainment. While this work was well organised, the use of the information being generated to improve outcomes for students was inconsistent. In some subjects the students knew their next steps in learning. This was particularly apparent in post-16 English and science, where the students were given clear directions on how to succeed. In science, for example, students used a criteria-based rubric well to set short-term goals for improvement. Marking was very varied throughout the school. In their notebooks students did not routinely receive the best advice on how to move forward in their learning. There was a lack of consistency by teachers in communicating the next steps or skills required. The school community had not clearly identified the expected knowledge and skills of all its learners, or how to use assessment to improve learning in lessons. In secondary science classes this work had started and progress in its implementation was already revealing the capacities of students to be partners in the assessment of their own work.

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

The curriculum was good at post-16, and acceptable in all other phases. The curriculum was based on several linked international programmes including the IPC, IGCSE and the IB-DP. These provided a broad and balanced framework that met the needs of most students. The school was reviewing outdoor learning for Foundation Stage children in order to make the most appropriate provisions. Steps had been taken to introduce greater attention to expectations of students, especially at transition points, but these did not provide sufficient breadth of objectives for teachers. Since the last inspection the rationale for the curriculum had been clarified in most parts of the school but was not yet in line with the school's vision. The adoption of appropriately related international benchmarks, designed to ensure planned progression and greater challenge for all students, had added quality. The introduction of the 'Big Write' focus and related components had a positive effect on the quality of written and spoken English in the primary school, and teachers were better able to establish targets and track progress. In Grades 7 to 9, references to international benchmarks were made in preparation for the introduction of the IB Middle Years Programme. New approaches to learning were taken, which placed more emphasis on cross-curricular links. The post-16 curriculum was good. It reflected international expectations and standards. Students' experiences were enriched at all levels by an extensive range of activities and expeditions, which also provided valuable links to the wider community.

How well does the school protect and support students?

The arrangements in place to ensure the health, safety and security of students were good. Regular checks were made and the response to safety issues was good, reflecting the level of assessed risk. Transport arrangements were good and monitored well by those responsible. There were good arrangements in place to ensure that students were safe at all times. Record keeping was comprehensive, and included regular checks of the facilities and evacuation procedures. Medical staff paid close attention to student welfare, and kept full records on their personal and physical development. When appropriate, important matters were quickly referred to parents. The medical staff members were fully involved in promoting healthy lifestyles. The arrangements for child protection were well publicised and most students and staff were conversant with them.

The quality of support for students was good, particularly the relationships between staff and students. There were high levels of mutual respect observed both in lessons and around the school. Specialist staff and systems were in place to give students guidance on the next phases of their education. The implementation of the school's positive behaviour policy was effective, with almost all students and staff acting quickly to deal with any issues. Students were effectively monitored both in terms of their personal and academic well-being; the school had correctly identified the need to improve the tracking of those who moved into the school during the academic year. Parents received clear, informative reports about academic performance and progress. Additional support for students with special needs was good, with individual and small group arrangements. Attendance and punctuality were well monitored, with any unexplained absence prompting immediate follow-up by the school in the secondary phase.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

Leadership was acceptable, overall. In a short period of time, the Executive Principal had provided a clear sense of direction, focused staff on raising standards and ensured that staff were committed to the improvement of all phases of the school. Certain aspects of the primary provision including, for example, the Foundation Stage curriculum, had been slow to improve. Leaders shared responsibilities with middle managers. The secondary school deans showed a clear commitment to accelerating the pace of change in the interests of raising students' attainment in the IGCSE and IB-DP programmes. Performance management arrangements were secure and professional development opportunities were targeted more effectively to teachers' needs. The capacity to improve and willingness to embrace necessary change were demonstrated by most leaders.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable and there was evident progress in addressing most of the recommendations from the previous inspection report. Not enough systematic work had been done to agree upon what constitutes best classroom practice. The action plan arising out of the previous inspection report did not have sufficient focus upon students' attainment, nor did it identify key milestones against which progress could be judged. Nonetheless, the school's priorities were based upon sound analysis of what will be

required over the coming years. Good monitoring procedures were increasingly embedded, for example, in the assessment of learning.

Partnerships with parents and the local community were acceptable. The school had established regular and effective links with parents, although these were not fully effective in strengthening students' learning. Since the previous inspection, more detailed and relevant information on the work of the school had been shared with parents. Monthly newsletters were posted on the website, clearly outlining topics of work. Parents' were welcome to express concerns regarding the progress of their children. However, parents were not systematically involved in the day-to-day work of promoting effective learning and raising standards. While there were some examples of parental input, this information was not used to its full potential. The school had some productive links with the community. Work placements had been organised and the school used the local environment to provide positive learning experiences.

Governance was acceptable. The Board had established a new strategic leadership model for the school which had paid dividends in a short time. Procedures for the creation of a parent advisory body had been put in place.

Staffing, facilities and resources were good overall. Teachers were generally well qualified and deployed effectively; the school had scrutinised teachers' qualifications. The school had some outstanding resources for learning in classrooms, including ICT, but there were gaps in library provision; for example, in Arabic. Students benefited from using designated areas of the building which promoted research and independent learning skills. The premise offered good learning environments and effective use was made of most of the space available, despite limitations for outdoor sports and other physical activities. The outside learning and play provision for Foundation Stage children was inadequate.

Summary of inspection judgements

In their evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school, the inspection team made judgements about the following aspects of the school's performance.

Four descriptors are: Outstanding; Good; Acceptable; Unsatisfactory.

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Islamic Education?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

How good are the students' attainment and progress in Arabic?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress over time	Not Applicable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in English?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

How good are the students' attainment and progress in mathematics?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

How good are the students' attainment and progress in science?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good
Progress over time	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Good

How good is the students' personal and social development?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good	Good	Good
Islamic, cultural and civic understanding	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are teaching and learning?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good

How well does the school protect and support students?				
Age group:	Foundation Stage	Primary	Secondary	Post-16
Health and safety	Good	Good	Good	Good
Quality of support	Good	Good	Good	Good

How good are the leadership and management of the school?	
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Acceptable
Partnerships with parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Acceptable
Staffing, facilities and resources	Good

How well does the school perform overall?
Acceptable

Next Steps

The school has been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how it will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau
Knowledge and Human Development Authority

How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact: inspection@khda.gov.ae.

More information about Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau can be found at www.khda.gov.ae.

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